

Proposal for international action plan and specialist network for globally threatened waders

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Through its association with Wetlands International, WSG acts also as part of the Waterbird Network of IUCN's Species Survival Commission (SSC). One of the functions of SSC's and Wetland International's Specialist Groups is the preparation of global action plans for relevant taxa. A significant number of taxa action plans have now been prepared (e.g. for Pheasants - McGowan & Garson 1995) or are in preparation (e.g. for Anatidae - Callaghan 1996).

Wetlands International also has a Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group (TWSG). However, despite its name, the remit of this group covers only Anatidae and other families of waterbirds (e.g. Rallidae, Anhimidae, Heliornithidae) not covered by other IUCN-SSC/Wetlands International Specialist Groups. Waders have been excluded from coverage by the TWSG owing to the existence of the WSG. The TWSG and its biannual Bulletin aims to identify those global Anatidae taxa that are threatened with extinction, to gather and exchange information and to promote their conservation.

Hitherto, the activities of the international WSG and its *Bulletin* have not focused especially on globally threatened waders. In part this may have been because of the misconceived idea that "somebody else is doing it".

AN INTERNATIONAL THREATENED WADER NETWORK?

It would thus appear that globally threatened waders are not benefiting from the attention that other waterfowl taxa receive within IUCN-SSC/Wetlands International Specialist Group's network.

There have, however, been several recent global reviews of information on threatened waders. Collar *et al.* (1994), in *Birds to watch 2: the world list of threatened birds*, reviewed and published an assessment of threat at the species level based on the new IUCN criteria (IUCN 1994; Table 1). More recently, in the third volume of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (HBW 3; del Hoyo 1996), a number of authors have prepared brief accounts of all wader species, which include assessments of status and very brief summaries of relevant conservation problems. Indeed, Piersma *et al.* in the preceding paper summarise the extent of our knowledge of plovers and sandpipers from their work preparing these HBW species accounts.

Both these global reviews, however, addressed conservation status (and assigned IUCN threat

categories) only at the level of the species. Conservation status can, however, vary markedly between populations or races of the same species (e.g. amongst the races of Knot *Calidris canutus*). Indeed, it can be argued that formal categorisation of threat status (IUCN 1994) is of greatest value to conservation at the population level since populations are the basic units of conservation management.

One aspect of the work the TWSG is undertaking for the Anatidae Action Plan is a formal appraisal of conservation status of all Anseriform species, mega-subspecies (those approaching species status), meso-subspecies (those not approaching specific status) and discrete populations (Callaghan 1996).

An inevitable consequence of the global taxonomic scope of *Birds to Watch 2*, was that its production was based largely on secondary sources and without the direct input of specialists or others with unpublished information about the waders concerned - although the species accounts of HBW 3 take us substantially further. There is still a need to elaborate data and information so as to further refine threat categories for waders at the population level. There is also the need to outline and prioritise those conservation requirements for threatened or near-threatened populations which would allow the reversal of their unfavourable population status or trends.

To this end, there thus seem to be a number of practical actions that WSG could take (in conjunction with other groups) to further the conservation of threatened or near-threatened waders.

1. Establish a global network of specialists

WSG is in a position to seek to identify those researchers and other wader workers with specific knowledge of populations of globally threatened waders, and, through its *Bulletin*, provide a regular means of communication and information exchange.

2. Publish information on threatened waders

The *Bulletin* should (in a way analogous to the Bulletin of the TWSG) publish information on threatened waders. It will be more proactive in soliciting review articles concerning the status of threatened or near-threatened species or populations. It will, in particular, seek information on the status of those waders categorised by Collar *et al.* (1994) as data deficient or poorly known. Editorial policy will give priority to publication of papers or

Table 1. Globally threatened wader species (from Collar *et al.* 1994).

		Population size	Range states with breeding or regular occurrence	IUCN status
Haematopidae				
Chatham Islands Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus chathamensis</i>	c. 100	New Zealand	Endangered
Charadriidae				
New Zealand Dotterel	<i>Charadrius obscurus</i>	c. 60	New Zealand	Endangered
Madagascar Plover	<i>Charadrius thoracicus</i>	?	Madagascar	Vulnerable
St Helena Plover	<i>Charadrius sanctaehelenae</i>	c. 315	St Helena (UK)	Endangered
Piping Plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	< 2 500	USA, Canada, Mexico, Bahamas, Cuba, Barbados, Bermuda (UK), Jamaica, Puerto Rico (USA), Virgin Islands (UK), Virgin Islands (USA)	Vulnerable
Mountain Plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>		USA, Mexico	Vulnerable
Hooded Plover	<i>Charadrius rubricollis</i>	> 5 000	Australia	Vulnerable
Shore Plover	<i>Thinornis novaeseelandiae</i>	c. 130	New Zealand	Endangered
Wrybill	<i>Anarhynchus frontalis</i>	c. 5 000	New Zealand	Vulnerable
Sociable Lapwing	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>	< 10 000	Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Israel, Pakistan, India, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Oman, Eritrea, Sudan, Egypt	Vulnerable
Scolopacidae				
Amami Woodcock	<i>Scolopax mira</i>	< 10 000	Japan	Vulnerable
Moluccan Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rochussenii</i>	?? extinct?	Indonesia	Vulnerable
Wood Snipe	<i>Gallinago nemoricola</i>	?	India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, Laos, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand	Vulnerable
Chatham Islands Snipe	<i>Coenocorypha pusilla</i>	c. 1 000	New Zealand	Vulnerable
Eskimo Curlew	<i>Numenius borealis</i>	?	Canada, USA, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile	Critical
Bristle-thighed Curlew	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>	< 10 000	USA, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tokelau (New Zealand), Fiji, Tonga, Niue (New Zealand), Western Samoa, American Samoa, Cook Islands (New Zealand), French Polynesia, Norfolk Island (Australia), Pitcairn Islands (UK)	Vulnerable
Slender-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius tenuirostris</i>	50-270	Ukraine, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Hungary, former Yugoslavia, Tunisia, Morocco	Critical
Nordmann's Greenshank	<i>Tringa guttifer</i>	c. 1 000	Russia, China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong (UK), Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India	Endangered
Tuamotu Sandpiper	<i>Prosobonia cancellata</i>	?	French Polynesia	Endangered
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	<i>Eurynorhynchus pygmeus</i>	2 000-2 800	Russia, China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong (UK), Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka	Vulnerable
Recurvirostridae				
Black Stilt	<i>Himantopus novaezelandiae</i>	c. 60	New Zealand	Critical
Glareolidae				
Jerdon's Courser	<i>Rhinoptilus bitorquatus</i>	?	India	Endangered

Table 2. Extinct wader species (from Collar *et al.* 1994).

		Former range states
Haematopididae		
Canary Islands Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus meadewaldoi</i>	Spain (Canary Islands)
Charadriidae		
Javanese Lapwing	<i>Vanellus macropterus</i>	Indonesia



Table 3. Near-threatened wader species (from Collar *et al.* 1994). Population sizes from Rose & Scott (1994).

		Population size	Range states with breeding or regular occurrence (<i>countries in italics are those with only non-breeding populations</i>)
Haematopididae			
African Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>	4 780	Namibia, South Africa
Charadriidae			
Magellanic Plover	<i>Pluvianellus socialis</i>	?	Argentina, Chile
Long-billed Plover	<i>Charadrius placidus</i>	10 000-25 000	China, <i>India</i> , Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, North Korea, Russia, South Korea
Malaysian Plover	<i>Charadrius peronii</i>	<10 000	Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam
Javan Plover	<i>Charadrius javanicus</i>	?	Indonesia
Diademed Sandpiper-plover	<i>Phegornis mitchellii</i>	?	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru
Grey-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus cinereus</i>	10 000-100 000	<i>Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam</i>
Scolopacidae			
Sulawesi Woodcock	<i>Scolopax celebensis</i>	?	Indonesia
Latham's Snipe	<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	36 000	<i>Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan</i>
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	15 000-100 000	<i>Angola, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Cyprus, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, India, Iran, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Sweden, Tanzania, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Yemen, Zambia, Zaire, Zimbabwe</i>
Fuegian Snipe	<i>Gallinago stricklandii</i>	?	Argentina, Chile, Falkland Islands (UK)
Imperial Snipe	<i>Gallinago imperialis</i>	?	Colombia, Ecuador, Peru
New Zealand Snipe	<i>Coenocorpha aucklandica</i>	20 000-100 000	New Zealand
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	50 000	<i>Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Falkland Islands (UK), Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, USA, Venezuela</i>
Far Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	21 000	<i>Australia, Brunei, China, Hong Kong (UK), Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand</i>
Asian Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>	15 000-20 000	<i>Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, China, Hong Kong (UK), India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam</i>
Glareolidae			
Black-winged Pratincole	<i>Glareola normanni</i>	<10 000-25 000	<i>Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Namibia, Nigeria, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Zambia, Zaire</i>

information about threatened or near-threatened species and populations.

3. Preparation of a global action plan for threatened or near-threatened wader populations

Many of the elements of such a plan currently exist in the wader species accounts in Volume 3 of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. As outlined above, there are significant benefits in further elaborating such information without the space constraints of *HBW*, as well as reviewing the conservation status of wader races and populations worldwide against IUCN criteria.

For some globally threatened waders, there are already well established national or international recovery/action plans (e.g. for Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* and Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* in the USA, Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* in Europe - (Gretton 1991, 1995) and Black Stilt *Himantopus novaezelandiae* in New Zealand (Pierce 1996)). For other waders, however, such formal assessments of conservation requirements have yet to be prepared. The mechanism of an IUCN global action plan would thus be a valuable means of reviewing conservation needs, assessing their relative priority and disseminating this information to inter-governmental organisations, government conservation agencies, non-governmental organisations and others seeking such information.

As in the Pheasant Action Plan (McGowan & Garson 1995), a key element is the elaboration of a series of high priority actions for individual species or for particular geographic areas. These can be presented in the form of discrete 'project proposals' in a form that allows funding for them to be sought from suitable sources. Conservation agencies always have need for advice on priority areas of work, and the action plan mechanism allows specialist input into the determination of their own work programmes and actions.

HOW MIGHT THIS BE ACHIEVED?

Initial discussions with TWSG have been fruitful, with offers of help and advice in establishing a process that might lead to an IUCN Action Plan for waders. The TWSG are already significantly advanced in the drafting of a global Anatidae Action Plan (Callaghan 1996) and WSG and other partners could benefit from their knowledge of the process and pitfalls.

The preparation of such a global plan would necessarily have to be undertaken on a co-operative basis between a number of wader specialist groups. A number of possibilities are under active discussion by the Executive Committees of the WSG and the AWSG, and others. The outcomes of these discussions will be reported in due course.

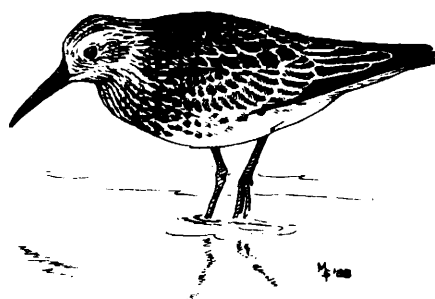
In the meantime, it would be very helpful to have the views of others on the desirability of establishing a global network of waderologists interested in promoting work on, or collating information about globally threatened waders. This might be a positive first step that could be taken to draft a global action plan and thus to so directed conservation action.

I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who might be able to contribute expertise or - as important! - time and enthusiasm to the task.

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Great Kestrel